



## Coho Salmon Restoration in Lapwai Creek, Idaho

### **Importance: A Link to the Past**

The Nez Perce homeland is crisscrossed by the Clearwater, Snake, and Salmon Rivers that all drain into the Columbia River and eventually to the Pacific Ocean. Coho salmon (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*) are especially suited for this area because they are anadromous, meaning that they spend their youth in freshwater and migrate to saltwater for most of their lives. When they are ready to lay their eggs or “spawn”, they swim back to their freshwater birthplace during late summer/early fall, spawn, and then die. Unsustainable fishing practices, hydro-electric dams, and environmental change have had disastrous effects on fish populations. In 1986, approximately ten years after the last dam on the Columbia River system was built, coho populations officially went extinct in the Clearwater River. Early restoration efforts were largely unsuccessful due to ice formation, de-watering, flooding, and siltation. Today, nearly all of Idaho’s native anadromous salmon and steelhead are listed as threatened or endangered under the Endangered Species Act. They are now protected in order to conserve critically low populations.

### **2011 Status**

In an effort to restore local coho broodstock in the Clearwater River and its tributaries, the Nez Perce Tribe developed a Clearwater Coho Restoration Program (CCRP) in 1994 as a result of a U.S. V. Oregon agreement between the Nez Perce, Umatilla, Warm Springs and Yakama tribes, Idaho, Oregon and Washington, and the federal government. In 1997, the first adult coho returned over Lower Granite Dam, just south of Lewiston, ID. As part of this program, in the fall of 2010 and 2011, technicians installed a temporary fish weir in Lapwai Creek at Nez Perce NHP’s Spalding site. The fish that were collected from the creek were transported to fish hatcheries in Idaho and Oregon, hatched, reared, and now contribute to the Columbia Basin and coastal ocean fisheries. The program reached an important milestone this year with the release of 550,000 hatchery reared juvenile fish that are the offspring of adults that returned to the basin in 2009.

### **Management Applications**

- Provide a place where the Nez Perce Tribe can monitor the condition and collection of native coho populations
- Provide feedback on the success of park management and restoration activities
- Detect habitat degradation and potential resource concerns
- Inform decision making for traditional coho harvesting

#### **Contact Information**

Jannis Jocius, [Jannis\\_Jocius@nps.gov](mailto:Jannis_Jocius@nps.gov)

<http://www.nps.gov/nepe/index.htm>

<http://twitter.com/#!/NezperceNP>

<http://www.facebook.com/DiscoverNezPerceNationalHistoricalPark>

### **Objectives**

- Determine the status of coho salmon in Lapwai Creek at Nez Perce National Historical Park’s Spalding site and determine how natural riparian vegetation and stream channel characteristics can be restored to assist coho recovery.



Nez Perce Tribal Fisheries staff built a temporary weir on Lapwai Creek in order to collect and rear over 100,000 coho salmon fish eggs.



Adult coho return to their stream of origin to spawn and die, usually at around three years old. Spawning males develop a strongly hooked snout and large teeth. Females prepare several redds (nests) where the eggs will remain for six to seven weeks until they hatch.

